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Personnel 12

DD/S 69-0570

07 FEB 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

SUBJECT : Proposal for a Revised Fitness Reporting System

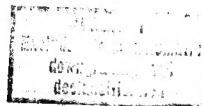
1. In reviewing the proposal of the Deputy Director for Plans to make changes in the Agency Fitness Report (Form 45), I believe the proposal in essence calls for:

- a. A reduction in the number of rating categories from five to three.
- b. A narrative evaluation of each specific duty listed in Section B of the present form.
- c. A narrative evaluation of overall performance by the rater.
- d. A narrative evaluation by the reviewing officer, and increased supervision by the reviewing officer of rating officers under his immediate supervision.
- e. Annual consultation with the employee.

2. I would like to comment on each of these points.

a. The fact that the lower two ("Adequate," "Weak") of the present five rating categories are not being used to the extent that the DD/P apparently feels they should be will not necessarily be corrected by reducing the categories to three -- "Unsatisfactory," "Satisfactory" and "Outstanding." The same factors that now result in supervisors rarely rating employees "Adequate" or "Weak" will pertain to "Unsatisfactory." Supervisors lacking the ability to distinguish between journeyman job performance and inadequate performance, or lacking the intestinal fortitude to sit down and tell an unsatisfactory employee the facts of his performance, will not acquire the ability to properly rate employees merely by changing the designation of rating categories. As a generalization supervisors hope to have the respect and liking of their fellow workers and to tell an employee that he doesn't measure up is found to be a very distasteful experience.

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The cure for the above must rest in training of supervisors, and command insistence and supervision to insure that fair ratings are given all employees by rating officials. Improper ratings are not only unfair to the unsatisfactory employee when his poor performance is not pointed out, but the strong performer is similarly downgraded by a supervisor who fails to distinguish adequately between strong and satisfactory performance.

b. The present Fitness Report form allows adequate space for comments on performance of duty, either specific duties or overall performance, and requests such comments in Section C. If a particular Component/Career Service should wish to have more specific comments, we see no reason why a command directive for more specific comments could not be fully satisfied on the present Fitness Report form.

c. The DD/P is seeking a more positive rating of overall performance; this objective is compatible with the present form. Again, a command directive for comments on specific traits or potential can be considered the prerogative of component chiefs or heads of Career Services. Most of the changes suggested involve matters that are already covered by many rating officers throughout the Agency when completing Section C of the present form.

d. All of the points suggested by the DD/P with respect to the evaluation by reviewing officials can be accommodated on the present Fitness Report form or by command supervision; the real problem may be as to how much personal knowledge the reviewing officer has of the ratee. Certainly one of our areas of difficulty with all Fitness Report forms that the Agency has used has been the failure of raters to adhere to realistic standards so that ratings given by different rating officers may be realistically compared. This brings up the old problem of "rating the raters;" some supervisors are by nature "tougher" than others. Command monitoring of Fitness Reports may yet be able to correct the more obvious cases of abnormal rating standards.

e. The proposal for an annual consultation between supervisor and employee is, in my opinion, a necessary and integral aspect of supervision. While I believe that many supervisors do hold such consultations at the time that the Fitness Report is shown to the employee, I see no difficulty in adopting a more positive and definitive policy in this respect. I agree that the fact of such consultation should be recorded.

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3. Fitness Reports remain a source of continued complaint throughout Government, and their proposed revisions provide steady employment for personnel technicians and psychologists. The Agency has also shared in this revision exercise. The present form has been in use for some nine years, and it has taken us all of those nine years to indoctrinate personnel -- those rated and the raters -- in its use. I do not believe that the proposed revisions are such that a new form, and several years of becoming used to it, are required. I would suggest as an alternative the continued use of the present Fitness Report form, with specific command guidance within each Career Service, if necessary, as to special requirements which are to be fulfilled by rating and reviewing officials. It goes without saying that improvement in rating objectivity and candor must be continuing goals throughout the chain of command. Where agreement exists as to specific instructions that should be altered or added, I would further recommend that these changes be made in the "Directions for Completing Form 45, Fitness Report."

SIGNED R. L. Bannerman

R. L. Bannerman
Deputy Director
for Support

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